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MINNETONKA CONFERENCE

JUNE 22-27, 1908

FIRST SESSION

(Tonka Bay Pavilion, Monday, June 22, 1908, 8.30 p. m.)

THE first general session of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the American Library Association was called to order by the president Arthur E. Bostwick.

The PRESIDENT: It gives me great pleasure to announce that this first general session of the Thirtieth Annual Meeting of the American Library Association is open. We are gathered here from all parts of the country, and there are many of us who have come thousands of miles in order to be in attendance at this meeting. That is no uncommon thing; but I am sure that some of you, on this stormy night, have thought that journey from the Tonka Bay Hotel to this auditorium longer than the whole trip from New York or San Francisco, or perhaps from Florida or Alabama. That is one of the discomforts, however, that is always attendant upon a meeting place that is somewhat distant from the headquarters hotel, and we will trust that we shall be sufficiently quiet here in our seclusion by the shores of the lake to make up for any discomfort that you may have in walking through the rain from the hotel.

The first thing on the program this evening is the president's address and the president has chosen as his subject

THE LIBRARIAN AS A CENSOR

"Some are born great; some achieve greatness; some have greatness thrust upon them." It is in this last way that the librarian has become a censor of literature. Originally the custodian of volumes placed in his care by others, he has ended by becoming in these latter days, much else, including a selector and a dis-

tributor, his duties in the former capacity being greatly influenced and modified by the expansion of his field in the latter. As the library's audience becomes larger, as its educational functions spread and are brought to bear on more and more of the young and immature, the duty of sifting its material becomes more imperative. I am not referring now to the necessity of selection imposed upon us by lack of funds. A man with five dollars to spend can buy only five dollars' worth from a stock worth a hundred and it is unfair to say that he has "rejected" the unbought 95 dollars' worth. Such a selection scarcely involves censorship and we may cheerfully agree with those who say that from this point of view the librarian is not called upon to be a censor at all. But there is another point of view. A man we will say is black-balled at a club because of some unsavory incident in his life. Is it fair to class him simply with the fifty million people who still remain outside of the club? He would, we will say, have been elected but for the incident that was the definite cause of his rejection. So there are books that would have been welcome on our library shelves but for some one objectionable feature, whose appearance on examination ensures their exclusion—some glaring misstatement, some immoral tendency, some offensive matter or manner. These are distinctly rejected candidates. And when the library authority whether librarian, book-committee, or paid expert, points out the objectionable feature that bars out an otherwise acceptable book, the function exercised is surely censorship.

May any general laws be laid down on this subject?

Let us admit at the outset that there is

absolutely no book that may not find its place on the shelves of some library and perform there its appointed function. From this point of view every printed page is a Document, a record of something, material, as the French say, *pour servir*; from a mass of such material neither falsity, immorality nor indecency can exclude it. I do not speak at this time, therefore, of the library as a storehouse of data for the scholar and the investigator, but rather of the collection for the free use of the general public and especially of collections intended for circulation. It is to these that the censorship to which I have alluded may properly apply and upon these it is generally exercised. I know of no more desirable classification of books for our present purpose than the old three categories—the Good, the True and the Beautiful. Those books that we desire, we want because they fall under one or more of these three heads—they must be morally beneficial, contain accurate information or satisfy the esthetic sense in its broadest meaning. Conversely we may exclude a book because it lacks goodness, truth or beauty. We may thus reject it on one or more of the three following grounds: badness—that is undesirable moral teaching or effect; falsity—that is, mistakes, errors or misstatements of fact; and ugliness—matter or manner offensive to our sense of beauty, fitness or decency. The first and third qualities, badness and ugliness, are often wrongly confounded and as I desire therefore to speak of them together, we will now take up the second, namely falsity or lack of truth. Strangely enough among all reasons for excluding books this is perhaps least often heard. Possibly this is because it applies only to non-fiction, and apparently in the minds of many, non-fiction is desirable simply because it is what it is. Again, the application of this test to any particular book can generally be made only by an expert. The librarian needs no adviser to tell him whether or not a book is immoral or indecent, but he can not so

easily ascertain whether the statements in a work on history, science or travel are accurate. This lack of expert knowledge is bad enough when inaccuracy or falsity of statement is involuntary on the author's part. But of late we have in increasing numbers a class of books whose authors desire to deceive the public—to make the reader take for authentic history, biography or description what is at best historical fiction. Again, the increasing desire to provide information for children and to interest the large class of adults who are intellectually young but who still prefer true to fictitious narrative, has produced countless books in which the writer has attempted to state facts, historical, scientific or otherwise, in as simple, and at the same time as striking, language as possible. Unfortunately, with some noteworthy exceptions, persons with comprehensive knowledge of a subject are generally not able to present it in the desired way. Cooperation is therefore necessary and it is not always properly or thoroughly carried out, even where the necessity for it is realized. Proper cooperation between the expert and the popularizer involves (1) the selection and statement of the facts by the former (2) their restatement and arrangement of the latter and (3) the revision of this arrangement by the former. It is this third process that is often omitted even in serious cyclopedia work, and the result is inaccuracy. Often, however, there is no cooperation at all; the writer picks up his facts from what he considers reliable sources, puts them into eminently readable shape, dwelling on what seem to him striking features heightening contrasts here and slurring over distinctions or transitions there. This process produces what scientific men call contemptuously "newspaper science," and we have as well newspaper history, newspaper sociology and so on. They fill the pages not only of our daily press but of our monthly magazines and of too many of the books that stand on our library shelves. It is unfair to blame the news-

papers alone for their existence; in fact, some of the best simple presentations of valuable information that we have, appear in the daily press. Then there are the text books. Any librarian who has ever tried to select a few of the best of one kind—say elementary arithmetics—to place on his shelves, knows that their name is legion and that differences between them are largely confined to compilers' names and publishers' imprints. In part they are subject to the same sources of error as the popularized works and in addition to the temptation to hasty, scamped or stolen work due to some publishers', or teachers' cupidity. This catalog might be extended indefinitely, but even now we begin to see the possibilities of rejection on the ground of falsity and inaccuracy. I believe that the chief menace to the usefulness of the public library lies, not as some believe in the reading of frankly fictitious narrative but in use of the false or misleading history, biography, science and art. Not the crude or inartistic printing of toy money but the counterfeiting of real money, is a menace to the circulating medium.

Against such debasement of the sterling coin of literature it is the duty of the librarian to fight; and he cannot do it single handed. Some things he should and does know; he is able to tell whether the subject matter is presented in such a way as to be of value to his readers; he can tell whether the simple and better known facts of history and science are correctly stated; he is often an authority in one or more subjects in which he is competent to advise as an expert; but only the ideal paragon, sometimes described but never yet incarnated, can qualify simultaneously as an expert in all branches of science, philosophy, art and literature. The librarian must have expert advisers.

Nor are these so difficult to obtain. The men who know are the very ones that are interested in the library's welfare and are likely to help it, without compensation. And in the smaller places where the variety and extent of special knowledge is

less comprehensive the ground covered by the library's collection is also less, and the advice that it needs is simpler. The advice should if possible be personal and definite. No amount of lists, I care not who prepares or annotates them, can take the place of the friend at one's elbow who is able and willing to give aid just when and exactly where it is needed. As well might the world's rulers dismiss all their cabinet ministers and govern from text books on law and ethics; the formula, the treatise, the bibliography—we must still have all these, but they must be supplemented by personal advice. And competent advisers exist, as I have said, in almost every place. The local clergy on questions of religion, and often on others too, the school principal on history and economics, the organist on music, the village doctor on science—some such men will always be found able and glad to give advice on these subjects or some others; and the place is small indeed that does not include one or two enthusiasts, collectors of insects or minerals or antiquities, who have made themselves little authorities on their pet hobbies and may possibly be the greatest or the only living authorities on those local phases that particularly interest the local librarian. It will do the librarian no harm to hunt these men out and ask their aid; possibly his own horizon will broaden a little with the task and his respect for the community in which he works will grow as he performs it.

But what if two of our doctors disagree? Then follow the advice of both. It might be disastrous for a patient to take two kinds of medicine, but it can never hurt a library to contain books on both sides of a question, whether it be one of historical fact, of religious dogma, or of scientific theory. This may not be pressed too far; the following of one side may be beneath our notice. It is not absolutely necessary for instance, for a small popular circulating library to contain works in advocacy of the flatness of the earth or of the tenets of the angel dancers of

Hackensack; but it is essential that such a library should make accessible to its readers the facts of the Reformation as stated by both catholic and protestant writers, histories of the American civil war written from both the southern and the northern standpoints, geological works both asserting and denying the existence of a molten core in the earth's interior. An impartial book is hard to find; it is a thing of value, but I am not sure that two partisan books, one on each side, with the reader as judge, do not constitute a winning combination. Against violent and personal polemics of course, the librarian must set his face. All such are candidates for rejection. It is fortunate for us in this regard that we are supplying the needs of all creeds, all classes and all schools. Each must and should have its own literature while each protests against violent attacks on its own tenets. Such protests, while often unjustified are helping us to weed out our collections. So much for deficiency in truth as a cause for rejection. Now let us consider deficiency in goodness and deficiency in beauty; or stated positively, badness and ugliness. These two things are confounded by many of us. Is this because the great majority of librarians to-day are of the sex that judges largely by intention and often by instinctive notions of beauty and fitness? To most women, I believe, all ugliness is sinful, and all sin is ugly. Now sin is morally ugly, without doubt, but it may not be esthetically so. And goodness may be esthetically repulsive. Badness and ugliness in books are both adequate grounds for rejection, but they need not coexist. Some of the worst books are artistically praiseworthy and would be well worth a place of honor on our shelves if their beauty alone were to move us. On the other hand, some books that are full of impropriety or even of indecency are absolutely unimpeachable from a moral standpoint.

Shakespeare and the Bible are often indecent without being in the least immoral. "Raffles" is in no wise indecent, but is

dangerously immoral. Bernard Shaw is often both indecent and immoral while at the same time so astoundingly clever that we stand gaping at him with our mouths wide open while he tosses down our throats the most unsavory thing.

What then, is the distinction between badness and ugliness? For our present purposes I believe it to be this: badness depends upon immutable laws, while ugliness, at any rate that of the kind which concerns us here, is a matter of convention. Virtue, with all due apologies to Mr Lecky and to many other eminent scholars has certain standards that do not vary with place or time. Let us grant that a given act may be good to-day and bad to-morrow, good in Tasmania and bad in Pennsylvania; this is beside the question. We have here to do with the classification of this particular act in certain fixed categories that of themselves remain bad or good. The act of cutting off a man's head may be good if the cutter is the public executioner, and bad if he be a private citizen; one may shoot an attacking highwayman but not an innocent friend. The reason for these differences, however, is that in one case the killing is murder while in the other it is not; murder itself always was and always will be bad.

Impropriety or indecency on the other hand, is purely arbitrary. Personally I am inclined to think this true of all beauty, but it is unnecessary to obtrude this view here. Impropriety is a violation of certain social customs, and although I should be the last to question the observance of those customs, we must grant, I think, that they rest on foundations quite other than those of right and wrong. In fact decency, instead of being on the same plane with morality, comes nearer to being properly ranked with those fixed categories, mentioned above, which are themselves always good or bad, but which may or may not include a given act, according to circumstances. Murder is always bad, but, whether the taking of life is or is not murder, depends on the cir-

cumstances; it may depend entirely on motive. So indecency is always bad, but whether a given act or object is or is not indecent depends on circumstances; it may depend not only on motive but on locality or environment. Objects and acts of the highest sanctity in one country may be regarded as low and vulgar in another—nay even, the standard varies from class to class, from one occupation to another; almost from family to family. One may mention, in all innocence, that which may bring a blush to the cheek of some listener, simply because of this instability of standard in the matter of impropriety. To this class of things particularly refers the celebrated dictum: "There is no thing in heaven or earth, Horatio, but thinking makes it so." This is unexceptionable Christian Science, but it is not quite true. A higher authority than Shakespeare has asserted that by thinking one can not make a single hair white or black; and this surely accords with the results of experience. Likewise no one by thinking can make badness goodness or the reverse, but whether a thing be improper or not depends entirely on thinking. Thinking makes it so. It is improper for a Mohammedan woman to expose her face in public because she thinks it is, and because that thought is an ingrained part of her existence. But although the Persian sect of Assassins thought with all their hearts that murder was good, it was still very evil. Are we getting too far away from the censorship of books? I think not. See the bearing of all this.

If a book is really bad—if it teaches that evil is good or that it makes no difference, it ought to be rejected uncompromisingly, despite the fact that it is void of impropriety or even artistically admirable. But if it is morally unobjectionable and yet contains that which is improper or indecent, it is then proper to inquire whether the degree and kind of this indecency is such as to condemn it, particularly taking into account the condition, the intelligence and the age of

those who would be likely to read it, and also the time and the readers for whom, if it is an old book, its author originally wrote it. With increasing civilization there are certain things that become more and more indecent, and others that become less and less so, owing to the shifting of points of view.

Let us now take up more specifically moral badness as a cause for rejection. We occasionally meet people who hold that the mention of anything morally bad in a book condemns it; while, on the other hand some would admit books whose atmosphere reeks with evil; whose bad characters live bad lives and speak bad thoughts, so long as the writer in his own person, does not commend evil or teach that it is good. Both these extremes are to be avoided. Surely we have outlived the idea that innocence and ignorance are the same thing. "You can't touch pitch," says the proverb, "and not be defiled." Granted; yet we may look at pitch, or any other dirt, and locate it, without harm; nay we must do so if we want to keep out of it. This is not saying that it is well to seek out descriptions of evil, or to dwell on them, in a work of fiction. Things necessary in the study of medicine, folk-lore or law may be abhorrent in a narrative intended for amusement, although the advent of the "problem" novel—the type of fiction in which the narrative form is often merely the sugar coating for the pill—introduces confusion here into any rule that we may lay down. But however foolish it is to insist that the very existence of evil be concealed from readers of fiction, since evil is a normal constituent of the world as we find it, it is certainly fair to object to a dwelling upon evil phases of life to such an extent that the resulting impression is a distortion of the truth. This distortion may be so great as to make it proper to reject the book wholly on the ground of falsity. A filling of the canvas with lurid tints is apt to convey, or at any rate is often so done as to convey, the idea that the existence of the evil that the writer depicts

is a matter of indifference. A man need not stop to assert his belief that theft is wrong whenever he tells the story of a robbery, but it is quite possible to tell a tale of theft in such a way as to leave an impression that it is a venial offense and to weaken in the reader the moral inhibition that must be his chief reliance in time of temptation. And for "theft," here we may substitute any form of moral dereliction that you may desire. One of the most potent vehicles of moral downfall of any kind is the impression that "everybody does it"—that some particular form of wrong doing is well-nigh universal and is looked upon with leniency by society in general. The man who steals from his employer or who elopes with his neighbor's wife is, nine times out of ten, a willing convert to this view. A book that conveys such an idea is really more dangerous than one which openly advocates wrong doing. There can be little difference of opinion here. There may be more in regard to the policy of telling the whole truth regarding a state of things that is morally very bad. It may be fatal to a patient to let him know how ill he is. And may it not also be injurious to a young man or woman to expose the amount of evil that really lies before them in this world? There is plausibility in this argument but it is out of date. There is much philosophy in the modern paradoxical slang phrase: "Cheer up! the worst is yet to come!" And indeed, if there is any superlative badness ahead of us, it is better that we should know it, rather than cultivate a false cheerfulness, based on misinformation, with the certainty of disillusionment. The Egyptians were right when they set a skeleton at their feasts. It was not to make the feasts gloomy, but to make the skeleton a familiar object by association; to accustom the feasters to think about death, how to avoid it as long as possible and how to meet it when inevitable. We should therefore welcome the truth in any book, unless it is that "half truth," which the poet tells us, is "ever the black-

est of lies," or unless it is so stated as to violate the canons of decency, in which case, as we have already seen, its rejection must be based on different considerations entirely.

It is these canons of decency, after all, that give the librarian his sleepless nights, not only because they are so frequently confounded with canons of morality but because, as we have already seen, they are arbitrary and variable. Consider the one case of French fiction. Mr Wister has told librarians that all subjects are "fit for fiction." This is interesting as an academic thesis, but when the French proceed to act upon it the Anglo Saxon catches his breath. Books, like men, when they are in Rome must do as the Romans do, and whatever may be proper in Paris, an American public library is justified in requiring its books to respect American prejudices. This is true, at any rate, of books in the English language, even if they are translations from a tongue whose users have other customs and other prejudices. But how about these books in the original? Can we assume that books in the French language are for Frenchmen and that our censorship of them is to be from the French and not the American point of view? Or shall we hold that they are to be read wholly or in part by persons whose mother-tongue is English and whose ideas of the proprieties are Anglo-Saxon? And shall we bear in mind also that the reading-public of a work of French fiction excludes in France the "young person" of whom the American library public is largely made up. This is only one of the perplexing questions that confront the American librarian in this field. Every one must struggle with it for himself, having in mind the force and direction of his own local sentiment; but few public libraries are treating it consistently and systematically. Probably, however, many librarians are placing on open shelves books in foreign languages, whose translations into English they would be inclined to restrict. In some cases, of course, ap-

peal to a wholly foreign group of readers, with their foreign point of view, may be assumed, as in the case of a Russian collection on the East Side of New York; though even here it is a question of whether this is not a good place to prepare these readers for a change in library "folkways"—to use Professor Sumner's expressive word.

Nor must we forget that our own ideas of propriety are constantly changing. Take the single instance of the use, in literature, of words regarded as profane or vulgar. Most of us can recollect a time when our acquaintances were likely to be shocked by the occurrence in a book of the expletive "damn"—that is, if it were spelled out. It was generally held to be unobjectionable, or at least less objectionable, if the second and third letters were replaced by a dash. Evidently this is the purest convention. This and worse words appear now, not without shocking some persons, to be sure, but certainly without shocking many of those who formerly would not have tolerated them. On the other hand it would not be difficult to instance words formerly common in good literature whose use would now cause something of a sensation. There are also good people who will read unmoved surprising words and expressions when put into the mouth of a cowboy or a Klondike miner, but whose gorge would rise if the same words were employed by a writer in propria persona.

What is true of words is true also of subjects. That which could not be touched upon yesterday is discussed freely to-day and vice versa. No way of dealing with the situation will fail to offend someone, and the only approximation to satisfaction will be gained by the use of common sense applied to each case as it comes up.

Indecency, of course, is not the only offense against beauty that a book may commit. It may be trashy, that is, its subject matter or the manner in which it is treated may be trivial and worthless. The dust of the street is neither beautiful nor valuable, although it may contain nothing

actively injurious to health or repulsive to the senses. The diction of the book may offend against beauty and order by its incorrectness; its paper, its typography, its binding, its illustrations may all be offensive to the eye. These last are mere matter of outward show, to be sure; it may be necessary to disregard them. They are usually reasons for excluding an edition rather than a book, though sometimes the only obtainable edition offends in so many of these ways as to make it unpurchasable, even if otherwise desirable. So far as they militate against the *usefulness* of the book rather than its *beauty*, as in the case of the badly sewed binding or paper that is comely but flimsy, they fall under the head of badness rather than that of ugliness—they are offenses against the Good and not against the Beautiful. Such material grounds for rejection, however are not peculiar to books, and I do not dwell on them here. Ugliness that consists in mere triviality or in incorrectness of diction has this in common with impropriety—it is arbitrary and conventional. With regard to language, this is obvious. The fact that a certain combination of sounds means one thing in France and another in England and is quite unintelligible perhaps in Spain, is a matter of pure convention, though the convention is sanctioned by long usage. The fact that the double negative is very good Greek and very vulgar English is equally arbitrary. These conventions have become serious things with us; they are of prime importance in the consideration of books, but it is desirable that we should classify them correctly.

With regard to triviality the case is not so clear, yet I feel strongly that it is a relative, not an absolute, equality. The term should be classed with that other misused word—superficiality. No book, of course, and no mind, is absolutely thorough, and the lesser grades of knowledge are as important in their place as the higher. What we should condemn is not that a man, or a book, possesses a certain slight degree of knowledge or of

ability, but the fact that, possessing it, he believes or represents it to be a higher degree. A man's desire, we will say, to memorize the Russian alphabet, so that he may read the proper names on book titles. Is he to be condemned because he knows no more of Russian? Another wishes to wield a hammer dexterously enough to drive a nail without smashing his fingers. Is he "superficial" because he is not an expert cabinet-maker? Still another has learned to play the piano well enough to amuse himself in his idle hours. Does his lack of skill lay him open to the charge of "superficiality"—these people may, it is true, think that they are respectively, a Russian scholar, a skilled carpenter, and a good pianist; then and then only are they culpable. The "superficiality," in other words, consists in mistaking a lesser degree of knowledge for a higher or in thinking that the lesser degree suffices for something that requires the higher—not in the mere limitation of the possessor. A superficial book is that which, skimming the surface of the subject, persuades the reader that he has gone into its depths; as for the skimming itself that might be quite adequate and sufficient for some purposes. So with "triviality." Nothing is trivial that has an aim and accomplishes it; as for the gradation of aims from unimportant up to important, I leave that to others. Who shall say whether the passing of an idle hour or the addition of a few facts to one's store of knowledge is the more important? The idle hour may be the recreation period of a hard working mind, without which it might break down from over-pressure, leaving to less competent minds the completion of its useful labor. The few facts might be quite unfruitful. This is why we should hesitate to condemn a trivial book that has beauty of form or some other positive virtue to commend it. Triviality is objectionable only when it masquerades as importance. Perhaps it would be better to say: a book that pretends to excellence along any line where it is really valueless is a dangerous book.

This brings us back to Truth as a criterion of excellence, for such a book is a hypothetical or false book, as much as if it definitely asserted as a fact that which is untrue.

When a book, therefore, comes up as a candidate for omission from the purchasing list, or perhaps for exclusion after it has actually been placed on the shelves, the librarian's first duty is to inquire whether it is objectionable because of falsity, of evil morality or impropriety. The first question may be determined only by reference to an expert. If the second is alleged, it is well to inquire whether the supposed immorality of the book be not in fact simply impropriety, and if impropriety is the only objection, whether it is of kind and amount likely to be properly offensive. If the charge of immorality is sustained I see no place for the book on the shelves of a public, circulating library.

What has been said may seem to need rounding out with specific illustrations and instances, but it is particularly desirable to avoid here anything of the nature of purely personal opinion and prejudice. It might be possible of course to define the content of certain well-known works by their conformity or non-conformity with the canons above laid down, without attempting to settle the question, at the moment, whether the degree of non-conformity, if it exists, is high enough to make exclusion from a public library desirable or necessary. From this point of view, *Othello*, we will say, is a play teaching a moral lesson in doing which it discusses and portrays sin, but never with approval, expressed or implied. The author uses words and expressions not in accordance with modern standards of propriety, although not contrary to those of his own time. In like manner Boccaccio's "*Decameron*," may be characterized as a collection of short stories connected by thin narrative, often telling of wrong-doing in a manner clearly implying that it is usual and unobjectionable with use of words and incidents frequently contrary not only

to modern ideas of propriety, but also to those of the author's time, except in the dissolute circles for which the tales were originally written. Some of the stories however, teach morality and the literary style and method are beautiful and commendable while the pictures of society are truthful. The implications of customary vice are simply reflections of life as the author knew it. "Gil Blas" by Le Sage, continuing in this vein, we may call a tale of adventure in which everything is set down as it happens good, bad and indifferent; important and trivial, with a hero who is something of a rogue although the wickedness is incidental and is described in such a way that the reader never mistakes it for virtue even when the writer tells it with a relish. The implication that wrongdoing is common, though undoubtedly conveyed, leaves the impression only that it is common among the people and under the circumstances of the tale which is undoubtedly correct. It would greatly aid the library censor if he could have annotations of this sort on all books intended for promiscuous public circulation. For his purposes, in fact, all literature should be evaluated. By the light of this one color of the critical spectrum the two or three books just noted possess at least some of the elements of greatness; yet good people differ regarding the extent to which they should be made freely accessible to the general public. I have tried to set down regarding them data on which all may agree, for the purpose of impressing upon you the fact that disagreement is not so much regarding the data, as regarding the application to them of principles which, if they have been stated correctly, are few, simple and readily accepted. We have been lightly skimming the surface of a subject vital to all who have to do with the production and distribution of books—to authors, editors, publishers, booksellers and above all to us librarians. The ranks of readers are swelling to-day; it is our boast that we are doing our best to swell them. They are recruited from classes whose literature

—if we may so extend the term—has been oral rather than written, whose standards of propriety are sometimes those of an earlier and grosser age, whose ideas of right and wrong are beclouded by ignorance and distorted by prejudice. And at the same time hosts of our people, with little background of hereditary refinement to steady them, have become suddenly rich, "beyond the dreams of avarice." The shock has upset their ideas and their standards. Riches have come so suddenly and so vastly even to the educated, to those whose culture dates back for generations, that it has overturned their ideals also. Our literature is menaced both from below and above. Books that distinctly commend what is wrong, that teach how to sin and tell how pleasant sin is, sometimes with and sometimes without the added sauce of impropriety, are increasingly popular, tempting the author to imitate them, the publishers to produce, the bookseller to exploit. Thank Heaven they do not tempt the librarian. Here at last is a purveyor of books who has no interest in distributing what is not clean, honest, and true. The librarian may, if he will—and he does will, say to this menacing tide, "thus for shalt thou go and no farther."

The PRESIDENT: The next thing on the program is the

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

The report of the Secretary will treat of a number of topics relating to the history of the Association or of general library progress during the past year, which do not seem to fall within the province of any of its other officers and committees.

Change of officers. One change in the personnel of the officers elected at Asheville has occurred through the resignation of Miss Helen E. Haines, who served the Association with rare fidelity and devotion for 16 years as recorder, vice-president and managing editor of its official organ. The resulting vacancy was filled